AEZ for tobacco in Andhra Pradesh

321. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY:
SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Andhra Pradesh is called tobacco capital of the country;

(b) whether it is also a fact in view of the bumper export of tobacco to other countries during 2004-05, Government of India are seriously thinking of setting up of an Agro Export Zone for tobacco in Andhra Pradesh;

(c) whether any request from the Government of Andhra Pradesh or from the public representatives has been received in the Ministry for setting up of Agro Export Zone for tobacco in Andhra Pradesh; and

(d) if so, what the Ministry has done on such a request?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are the two major Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco producing States of the country.

(b) to (d) The export of tobacco and tobacco products has steadily increased over the years and reached Rs. 1362.18 crores during 2004-05. No proposal for setting up of an Agri-Export Zone has been received either from the State Government of Andhra Pradesh or from public representatives. However, a special mention regarding the need for setting up an Agri-Export Zone for tobacco in Andhra Pradesh was made in the Parliament during the last session.

Patent to wheat

322. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are examining issues on patent to wheat;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have any proposal to impose strict liability on corporations in case of genetic contamination and to put in place a system to preserve and protect the country's rich bio-diversity;

(d) if so, whether Government had held talks with the States in this regard;

(e) if so, the response of the States in each case; and

(f) the present status of the issue on patent to wheat?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a), (b) and (f) The Government is seized about issues concerning patent on wheat. A Civil Writ Petition No. 64 of 2004 in the matter of Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology *vs.* Union of India and others was filed in the Hon'ble Supreme Court praying to direct the Government of India to facilitate revocation of a patent granted by European Patent Office on a soft-milling wheat which produces dough having unique qualities. On the direction of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, in this case, a Committee was appointed by Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research & Education and Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research to examine the matter. The report of the Committee has since been submitted to the Hon'ble Supreme Court. The patent in question was revoked on 3.10.2004 as per the European Patent rules.

(c) to (e) The Biological Diveristy Act, 2002 provides for conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the use of biological resources, knowledge and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. This Act also provides for conservation, sustainable utilization and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of utilization of genetic resources.

Section 57, read with Sections 55 and 56, provides the penalties which could be imposed on a company for an offence or contravention under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

South Asian Free-Trade Agreement

323. SHRIMATI SUKHBUNS KAUR:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:
MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) came into being and has been given effect to by Government with effect from January, 2006;